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3. A proposal to permit the assessment of real estate along the lines of proposed extensions of the mains of municipal water plants for the purpose of meeting the cost of laying such mains. Upon the property owner making connection to these mains and becoming an actual user of water, the amount of the assessment is to be returned to him according to a scheme to be devised. The assessment is to be calculated on the cost of laying 6-inch pipe and where a larger pipe is laid the difference is to come from the general funds of the plant.

4. A proposal to allow the board of trustees or other governing body of a municipal water plant to pension and retire at its discretion any employee who has been in the service of the plant for twenty-five years or more.

The members of the Iowa Section hold that it is their duty to leave untried no opportunity to place the water supplies of the state in a condition of unquestionable efficiency, with respect to quality, quantity and management. They are united in this policy and while they may not obtain all they ask at this time, their combined influence is unquestionably making an impression where the independent action of a few individuals would be less regarded. The fact that such united action is being taken, after full discussion, by a committee which is devoting itself whole-heartedly to its responsibilities, is worth mentioning in view of the occasional criticism made against water works men that it is impossible to get them to act collectively except in strictly technical matters.

JACK J. HINMAN, JR.

#### PROGRESS IN B. COLI TESTS

The paper by Captain Levine in this issue of the JOURNAL deserves the thoughtful attention of bacteriologists specializing in water analysis. There is a real necessity for developing a generally acceptable method of determining with fair reliability the presence of *B. coli* in water in a short time. The paper referred to is encouraging, like that by Dr. William Mansfield Clark in the JOURNAL two years ago. The suggestions are a step in the right direction, and as such are of distinct value to the bacteriologist and should be of interest to water works men as a class.

There is one point which a reading of the paper raises that is worth attention. This is the meaning to be attached to such terms

as "approximately correct" and the like. Captain Levine takes exception to a rather common practice among bacteriologists in interpreting the amount of gas formed by coli-like bacteria. He holds that in untreated water the rate of gas formation in lactose broth is of more importance than the amount of gas formed. If 10 per cent or more gas forms in 24 hours he holds that this is a reliable indication of the probable presence of *B. coli*, because this indication was confirmed in 97.7 per cent of his tests. However, out of the 193 samples classed as "moderate" in his table 1, a group developing less than 10 per cent of gas in twenty-four hours, 91.2 per cent were confirmed as *B. coli*, which a good many persons will be inclined to regard as "approximately" as good a ratio as 97.7 for some purposes. Even in the case of the 276 samples classified as "slow," a group developing no gas in twenty-four hours but 10 per cent or more in forty-eight hours, there were 202 samples or 73.2 per cent confirmed. That, also, is a fairly high ratio from some viewpoints.

There is evidently some relation between the rapidity of gas formation and the presence of *B. coli* in untreated waters. It is a subject that deserves to be investigated thoroughly as quickly as practicable in a number of laboratories. Until such comprehensive investigations have been made the writer is reluctant to draw very definite conclusions from the interesting and valuable results given in the paper under consideration. It is also apparent from these results that the rapidity of gas formation in the case of chlorinated waters may bear some relation to the presence of *B. coli*, for the percentage of tubes confirmed decreases as the rapidity of gas formation decreases.

The remarks in the paper about the relatively smaller importance of *B. aerogenes* in comparison with *B. coli* bear out the testimony of others who have lately been studying this family of bacteria. Captain Levine points out that the observations hold "particularly when considering stored and chlorinated waters." His reasons for rating a ground water as suspicious which contains *B. aerogenes* seem logical.

The use of the simplified eosine-methylene-blue-agar is very interesting and the results obtained with wider use of it will be of value. The promise of an acceptable method of rapid differentiation of *B. coli* and *B. aerogenes* which it offers is gratifying.

GEO. A. JOHNSON.